

In closing, President Bush said it best at the signing of the ADA. He said, "This Act is powerful in its simplicity. It will ensure that people with disabilities are given the basic guarantees for which they have worked so long and so hard. Independence, freedom of choice, control of their lives, the opportunity to blend fully and equally into the right mosaic of the American mainstream." Let us remember that.

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE RETIREMENT OF GENERAL JOHN GORDON, USAF

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Goss) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding American who has faithfully served our country for the past 32 years, General John A. Gordon.

General Gordon, who retired from the Air Force earlier this month, was awarded two commendations this morning in a ceremony at the George Bush Center for Intelligence. George Tenet, Director of Central Intelligence, awarded him the National Intelligence Distinguished Service Medal; and General Michael Ryan, Air Force Chief of Staff, awarded him the Air Force Distinguished Service Medal.

John Gordon's Air Force career began in 1968, and his early assignments were in the highly scientific areas of weapons research, development and acquisition. He went on to serve as a long-range planner at the Strategic Air Command. He was then assigned as a politico-military affairs officer at the Department of State. He returned to the real Air Force as commander of the 90th Strategic Missile Wing.

General Gordon also served our country as a staff officer with the National Security Council and in several senior Department of Defense planning and policy-making positions.

Joining the intelligence community late in his career, General Gordon was first appointed as associate director of Central Intelligence for Military Support back in 1996. Following that assignment, he was named Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, the second-highest ranking intelligence officer in the United States, a position he held with great distinction from October of 1997 through June of this year.

His tenure came at a time when the intelligence community was rebuilding in response to new threats to the United States national security that have emerged since the end of the Cold War, things we know as transnational threats, terrorism, weapons proliferation, weapons of mass destruction proliferation, illegal arms sales, narcotics, those types of things. As DDCI, General

Gordon worked closely with Congress and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence to improve U.S. intelligence capability and to safeguard sensitive national security information.

General Gordon brought a singular sense of purpose to the Deputy Director's job that was highly valued by those inside and outside the intelligence community.

I would like to point out, despite the fact that he does not have a background in intelligence, John Gordon would have made a great case officer. Last year he took time to sit down with a group of high school students from my district, some of the top students in southwest Florida. After he spoke to them, several were ready to sign up for a career in the U.S. intelligence community; and this comes in an era where many gifted students are leaving school early to earn a fortune in a new digital economy. I think General Gordon has another career out there as a recruiter for Intelligence if he wants it.

From this gentleman's perspective, it was a pleasure to work with General Gordon while he wore the uniform of the United States Air Force. I am sure he will bring the same diligence and professionalism and integrity to his first civilian job as the Under Secretary of Energy for Nuclear Security and the first administrator for the National Nuclear Security Administration. As we all know, our nuclear secrets and weapons abilities will be more secure, and needs to be more secure in places like Los Alamos, with John Gordon as their steward. We look forward to his taking up the reins.

On behalf of the members of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, I would like to thank General John Gordon for his continuing service to our Nation. I wish John and his wife, Marilyn, and their daughter, Jennifer, all the best for their future. I offer sincere gratitude for the family sacrifices I know have been made to allow General Gordon to commit so much time and energy to distinguish himself in critical 7-day-a-week, 24-hour-a-day top-level jobs that he has done so well. That is a great contribution to our country. It deserves to be recognized.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE FOR SENIORS TOP PRIORITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and have an opportunity to speak about an issue that I have come to the floor very frequently to speak about for many, many months now.

I am asking my colleagues to make sure that we place prescription drug

coverage for seniors under Medicare as a top priority for us before we leave session this year. Time is running out.

We have the best economy in a generation. We have budget surpluses that we are deciding how to use and how to invest. I cannot think of a more important issue than investing in the future health and well-being of older Americans and families all across the United States.

I have been coming to the floor of the House on a regular basis to speak out and to share stories of constituents of mine, family members, older Americans who have been calling me and writing me.

I set up a hotline back in August of last year and have set up something called the Prescription Drug Fairness Campaign, whereby I have been asking people to share with me their stories, what is really happening in their lives as it relates to the issue of their medications and the high costs of prescription drugs. I have been overwhelmed with the letters and the phone calls that we have received.

I want one more time to be reading a letter this evening on the floor of this House from one of my constituents in Michigan. This is a letter from Mr. James Schlieger from Flint, Michigan. He writes to me: "My wife Joan has Alzheimer's Disease. In 1999, my out-of-pocket payment for preparations was \$3,020.43. Our other medical expenses were \$3,909.79. Our Social Security income is \$20,252. This leaves us little over \$13,000 to pay our property taxes, utility bills, food, and gasoline and all of our other expenses. Bottom line, there is nothing left to enjoy the Golden Years. With my wife's condition, in a few years, we will have depleted our savings, then we will have to become dependent on government care. Please help us. James Schlieger from Flint, Michigan."

I think we need to help Mr. Schlieger. We need to make sure that our seniors are not using all of their savings to pay for the cost of the health care that they are supposed to be receiving under Medicare.

This Sunday is the 35th anniversary of the day that the Medicare legislation was signed. At the time it was set up, it covered the way health care was provided. The promise was there that, once an American reached the age of 65 or was disabled, they knew that there would be health care available to them.

The difficulties that we have now is that health care has changed. The way we treat people has changed. Instead of it being in the hospital and with operations and inpatient prescription drugs, we are now in a situation where the majority of care is outpatient, is home health care. It almost always involves prescription drugs. So Medicare simply needs to be modernized to cover the way health care is provided today.

There are others who are talking about privatizing. There are others

talking about other kinds of approaches. I would urge my colleagues to simply look at a system that the seniors of our country know and trust. It has worked. It just needs to be updated. If we cannot do that now with the best economy in a generation, with budget surpluses and the ability to take a small percentage and invest that back into Medicare to lower the cost of prescription drugs, I do not believe we ever will.

So I call on my colleagues one more time. Let us not let one more senior sit down at breakfast in the morning and decide, do I eat today or do I pay for my medications? That is a choice that older Americans should not have to make.

I am going to do everything in my power to fight on behalf of the seniors of Michigan, to make sure that we modernize Medicare for prescription drugs.

WHALE KILLING ENDS FOR MAKAH INDIAN TRIBE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. METCALF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, the Makah Indian Tribe in Washington State has been granted special permission by the Clinton-Gore administration to kill four gray whales each year. They have already killed one whale and injured at least one. By the way, for every whale killed, there is an average of two that are injured and get away.

But last year, I filed an appeal along with several co-plaintiffs to overturn the decision made by the U.S. District Court to allow whaling by the Makah Indian Tribe. Two months ago, a three-judge panel from the 9th Circuit Court handed down a decision in that case. The decision specifically confirmed my position. We won. Whale killing was ended. The only way the Clinton-Gore administration would be able to gain approval for this whale hunt now would be to blatantly violate the Federal environmental protections law.

In fact, the court specifically asked, and I quote from the decision language, "Can the Federal Defendants now be trusted to take the clear-eyed hard look at the whaling proposal's consequences required by law, or will a new (Environmental Assessment) be a classic Wonderland case of first-the-verdict, then-the-trial?"

Alice in Wonderland, indeed. However, in this story, the heads that are being chopped off belong to the majestic gray whales that ply the western coast of America and each year travel north to the Bering Sea and occasionally even to Siberia. Most Americans believe that we have risen above the wanton slaughter of the buffalo for their hides, or the whales for the value of their body parts.

This would have been the first step toward returning to the terrible commercial exploitation of whales of the 19th century. In the papers filed with NOAA by the Makah Tribe, the tribe refused to deny that this was a move toward renewal of commercial whaling.

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It is important to understand that the International Whaling Commission has never sanctioned the Makah whale hunt. Under the International Whaling Convention, of which the United States is a signatory, it has been legal to hunt whales for scientific or aboriginal subsistence purposes only. The tribe clearly has no nutritional need nor subsistence need to kill the whales.

Even in the face of the strong International Whaling Commission's opposition to the original Makah proposal in 1997, the U.S. delegation unbelievably ignored years of U.S. opposition to whale killing and cut a sleazy deal with the Russian government in a back-door effort to find a way to grant the Makah's the right to kill whales.

The agreement was to allow the Makah Tribe to kill four of the whales from the Russian quota each year under the artificial construction of cultural subsistence. Before this shameful back-door deal, the United States had led the opposition worldwide to any whale killing not based on true subsistence need. Cultural subsistence is a fraud. It is a slippery slope to disaster.

Cultural subsistence would have expanded whale hunting to any nation with an ocean coastline and any history of whale killing. The whaling interests in Norway and Japan, who still occasionally pirate whales on the high seas, were delighted with the U.S. position. They have orchestrated and financed an international cultural subsistence movement. America's historical role as a foe of renewed whaling around the world would have been drastically undercut.

The treaty signed by the Makah Tribe in 1855 only gives them the right to hunt whales in common with the citizens. This provision was to ensure equal rights, not special rights. Now, under the 9th Circuit Court ruling, the Makah Tribal Government will not be allowed to kill whales when it is illegal for anyone else in the United States to do so.

It is shameful that the Clinton-Gore administration supported a proposal that flies in the face of the values, interests and desires of the majority of United States citizens. It violates the law and the clearly stated U.S. policy in opposition to whaling.

I support those Makah tribal elders and others who oppose this hunt, and I am deeply appreciative of the court ruling and our success in stopping the renewal of the barbaric practice of whaling.

ENSURING A COMPETITIVE AIRLINE INDUSTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I am deeply troubled over the possibility of mergers of major domestic airlines. Many observers have predicted that if the proposed merger of United Airlines and US Airways is allowed to proceed, it will be followed by mergers of other major carriers, and soon we will have an industry dominated by three mega-carriers. This would be devastating to consumers.

The father of deregulation, Alfred Kahn, observed "Because of the United-US Airways threatening to set off a series of imitative mergers that would substantially increase the concentration of the domestic industry, there is a possible jeopardy here to the many billions of dollars that consumers have been saving each year because of the competition set off by deregulation."

I am strongly opposed to the United-US merger and other mergers that likely will follow. I have asked the Department of Justice and Transportation to use all available authority to stop the mergers under the antitrust laws, and many Members have indicated they share those concerns.

At hearings held in several House and Senate committees there was little support for the United-US merger. Members raised concerns about the impact of the merger on service to the areas they represent as well as to the Nation at large. As one Member in our hearing in our Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure observed, "I don't think the merger is a win-win for the consumer. As a matter of fact, it might be a lose-lose look for the consumer." A number of Members expressed the sentiment that if Congress were to vote on the proposed United-US merger, it would fail.

I hope and expect that the Department of Justice will heed those strongly-held views. At the same time, however, I believe we have to begin thinking about steps we would take to protect consumers if competition in the industry is reduced to a point where it is no longer an affective check on monopolistic behavior. I must emphasize that this type of legislation is not my preference. I would greatly prefer an environment in which consumers are protected by adequate competition in a free market.

The legislation I am introducing will give the Department of Transportation extended authority to protect the American consumer should a series of mergers or acquisitions be approved, leaving our domestic market with three or fewer carriers, who would account for over 70 percent of scheduled revenue passenger miles. The authority